

Council Innovation Funded Calgary Community Court: Pilot Readiness Project

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Priorities and Finance Committee receive this report for the Corporate Record and discussion.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Calgary Community Court Readiness project was funded by the Council Innovation Fund (CIF) in the amount of \$250,000. The project was proposed and led by the Community Justice Collaborative: Calgary (CJCC), composed of organizations representing the justice, social service, and health sectors. The Calgary Police Service acted as the fiscal agent for these funds on behalf of the CJCC. While the project saw many successes, there are court resource challenges and the pilot cannot proceed at this time. The CJCC recommends that the unspent funds be returned to the CIF.
- What does this mean to Calgarians? A community court is an alternate approach to justice that focusses on individuals struggling with trauma, addiction, mental health, and/or homelessness as underlying causes for criminal involvement.
- Why does this matter? A community court approach would address individual needs and the root causes of criminal involvement thereby reducing demand on the traditional justice system. The CIF dollars were intended to assist the CJCC to develop the three-year pilot and generate a proof of concept for long-term transformational change while securing the funds needed to operate.
- The CIF \$250,000 allowed the CJCC to hire an Implementation Coordinator to move the community court blueprint towards an operational readiness state and to build the project evaluation platform in conjunction with the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy.
- On 2018 July 30, Council approved the application to utilize the CIF for the Calgary Community Court Pilot Readiness project in the amount of \$250,000.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A city of safe and inspiring neighbourhoods.
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

The CIF supported the foundational research, communication, and evaluation of a community court model for Calgary, and the exploration of funding sources.

Research, Development and Consultation

- Development of policies and procedures, guiding principles, roles and responsibilities, operational structure, and funding/in-kind requirements.

Communicating Value to Partners and Potential Funders

- Development of the Calgary Community Court benefit and cost savings to communicate value to partners and potential funders.

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- CIF investment allowed the CJCC to present the Calgary Community Court blueprint to the provincial and federal governments seeking cross-governmental endorsement and funding to operate the three-year pilot.

Evaluation

The Calgary Community Court evaluation framework proposed a method and approach to measuring the following outcomes:

- Improvements in community safety by reducing recidivism in populations experiencing vulnerability,
- How the court helps people who commit offences by assessing their needs and connecting them with appropriate services,
- Reductions in victimization, repeat offender case processing, and jail time costs,
- Improvements in public safety and quality of life for individuals and community, and
- Improvements in systems integration by streamlining the referral processes for shared clients.

The project measures of success have been summarized in Attachment 2.

Mindful of the current economic climate and the uncertainty of the three-year pilot funding and in-kind resourcing, the CJCC has made the collective decision to return the remaining CIF dollars. However, the CIF investment in the research and development of the community court will continue to add value as the Community Action on Mental Health and Addiction strategy develops and explores innovative approaches to address mental health and addiction-related issues in Calgary. The CJCC will reconvene to support the three-year pilot should court resources become available.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- Public Engagement was undertaken
- Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- Public/Stakeholders were informed
- Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

In 2015, a multi-disciplinary group of leaders from the justice, social service and health systems came together to explore the opportunity and feasibility of further advancing the integration of community justice models in Calgary and forms the CJCC. The CJCC has worked together towards this goal since 2015, and most recently in 2020 October came together to receive updates on the state of judicial support and agree on the unspent Council Innovation Fund dollars being returned at this time. Attachment 3 identifies the CJCC organization representation.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

The CJCC has resulted in two valuable outcomes: first, systems leaders worked together to identify and better understand complex and complicated shared issues in our community; and second, research was completed, and foundational documents prepared that will benefit future projects.

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Environmental - Not applicable

Economic - Not applicable

Service and Financial Implications

Other: Council Innovation Fund – return of unused project funds.

Council approved \$250,000 in 2018 to fund the Calgary Community Court Pilot Readiness project. While the project was successful in developing the necessary foundation for the court to proceed, an amount of unused funding remains and will be returned to the CIF in the amount of \$100,252.92. The total 2018-2019 project spend was \$149,747.08 (see Attachment 4 for details). There are no anticipated future operating budget requirements and no impact on City of Calgary capital budget.

RISK

Returning allocated funds may be viewed as the investment not yielding the intended outcome. While Council's support of the exploration stage of the project has not yet resulted in a successful pilot of the community court, the CJCC is confident that this provides a sound foundation for future initiatives and a state of readiness should court resources become available. As the systems adapt to the long-term impact of COVID-19, there will be a need for different approaches and programs. This group is well placed to work together to support Calgarians.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Background and Previous Council Direction
2. Calgary Community Court Pilot Readiness Measures of Success
3. CJCC Organization Representation
4. Calgary Community Court Pilot Readiness Expenditures

Department Circulation

| General Manager | Department | Approve/Consult/Inform |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Deputy Chief Katie McLellan | Calgary Police Service | Approve |
| Carla Male | Chief Financial Officers Department | Inform |